

COMET BLAST

The Principal's Pen

February 2012

Volume 2, Issue 4

Dear Grace Snell Middle School Families:

I hope you and your families had a restful and enjoyable winter break. Can you believe we are in the throes of the second semester?

Parents, the faculty and staff will be hosting the second Grace Snell Middle School Curriculum night on Thursday, March 8, 2012, beginning at 6:00 pm. Please make every effort to attend. You will learn about the CRCT and can see firsthand all the dynamic ways GSMS' teachers incorporate literacy into all subjects! Many students will be involved in special presentations; therefore, please come out, support your student, and enjoy the fun!

Grace Snell Middle School Literacy Extravaganza

6:30 - 7:15 pm

Let's Talk CRCT! - Ms. Spraggs

Study & Test Taking Strategies - Counselors

Accessing the OAS Website - Mr. Vigilant

Grace Snell Middle School Website - Mr. Vigilant

PTSA Presentation - Ms. Vandy Dixon

Literacy at Work in the Classroom

7:25 - 7:45 pm - Session One

7:50 - 8:10 pm - Session Two

8:15 - 8:35 pm - Session Three

Option 1 - Language Arts & Social Studies

Option 2 - Math & Science

Option 3 - Hands-on activity on how to access the OAS Website

Please remember that Monday, February 27, and Tuesday, February 28, have been set aside for Early Release conferences. If you have questions or concerns about your child's progress, please use this conference time to meet with your child's teaching team to discuss what can be done to ensure student success. If your child is doing well academically, you are also invited to meet with teachers to discuss your child's great achievements!

Sincerely,



Ms. Joyce Spraggs
Proud Principal of
Grace Snell Middle School



Counselors' Corner

CLASSROOM GUIDANCE

Second semester classroom guidance at Grace Snell Middle School is focused on career planning by using the GACollege411 website. All GSMS students will be given their own user ID and password for this program, which they will be able to use for college and career planning throughout middle and high school. Sixth grade students will complete the "Career Key" inventory, which asks various questions about their likes and interests. The survey is designed to help middle school students learn more about themselves and their options for the future. Seventh grade students will also take the "Career Key" inventory and then select three career clusters of interest. Eighth graders will explore three different careers and discuss the relationship between school subjects they are studying now and potential career choices. All results will be saved to the student's individual portfolio, which is accessible at home if parents wish to see the results. A world of information is available on post-secondary education, careers and financial aid through www.gacollege411.org.

PRESENTATION ON PREPARATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL

Ms. Jenny Cleveland, Dr. Carol Loveless, and South Gwinnett counselor, Dr. Teresa Wilburn spoke with 8th grade parents on January 11 about student preparation for high school. Topics included graduation requirements, independence and responsibility, extracurricular activities, and the need for time management. Check the GSMS website for information on upcoming orientation and registration events for the rising 9th graders.

CAREER DAY

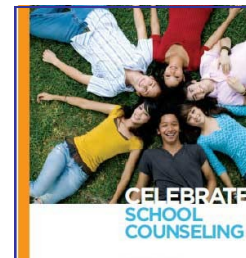
The GSMS counselors are hosting a "Career Lunch and Learn" for 8th grade students on Wednesday, February 8. During this time, students will be able to meet and speak with individuals representing various careers. The career representatives will be able to discuss education requirements, average income, daily duties and specifics about their careers. The counselors are hopeful that the 8th grade students will get valuable information on potential careers as a result of this event.

ATTENDANCE

The successful progress of GSMS students depends on prompt and regular attendance. In an effort to help students improve their attendance, the counseling department has meetings with a select group of students. In these meetings, students learn the importance of attending school regularly and getting a good education. They also discuss the potential problems that can arise when students have poor attendance. At the end of each meeting, each student creates a personal goal toward decreasing his/her number of unexcused absences. The counselors are hopeful that these students, as well as all GSMS students, will make it a goal to have excellent attendance, resulting in outstanding academic achievement.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS CELEBRATE DURING NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK

National School Counseling Week, sponsored by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), will be celebrated from February 6 through February 10 to focus public attention on the unique contribution of professional school counselors within U.S. school systems and how students are different as a result of what school counselors do. National School Counseling Week highlights the impact school counselors have in helping students achieve school success and plan for careers.



"School counselors work with all students to remove barriers to learning by addressing students' academic concerns, personal/social skills and career awareness in post-secondary options," said Kwok-Sze Wong, Ed.D., ASCA executive director. "Comprehensive school counseling programs help to increase student achievement and provide a much-needed resource for students, parents, teachers and administrators. School counselors are integral to student success."

As part of its celebration for National School Counseling Week, GSMS will host its first annual "Career Lunch and Learn", run daily morning announcements on student keys for success, and sponsor a college spirit day. The counselors and Ms. Spraggs will also attend the annual counselor recognition ceremony, where GSMS' progress toward county counseling program goals will be noted.

Parents or community members with specific questions or concerns about the GSMS' counseling program are welcome to contact Ms. Cleveland or Dr. Loveless at 770-554-7750. More general information can also be found on ASCA's Web site, www.schoolcounselor.org as well as the GPCS website at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/85257483004E9404.nsf/0/693F92A5B6B64CE58525743B00549ED?Open&Highlight=0,counselor>.

Core Curriculum

SPELLING BEE NEWS

Spelling Bee Winner!

On Friday, January 6, Grace Snell Middle School held its Spelling Bee in the Media Center. GSMS' winner, Talia Davis, is an 8th grade student in Mrs. Mary O'Rourke's Language Arts class. The alternate winner, Sydney Schomberg, is a 7th grade student in Mrs. Cynthia Slack's Language Arts class. GSMS is so proud of both students and the other 24 participants. Out of 1,200 students, it is a feat just to make it to the top 26 participants.



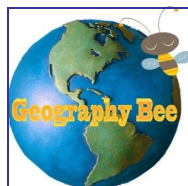
Talia will compete in the Gwinnett County Spelling Bee at Central Gwinnett High School on Saturday, February 4, at 8:30 am. In the event that Talia cannot participate, Sydney will compete in her place. Please join in congratulating Talia Davis as she moves on to represent GSMS in the county bee.

GEOGRAPHY BEE NEWS

Geography Bee Winner!

Congratulations to 7th grader Sebastian Williams who is GSMS' First Annual Geography Bee Winner! The 2nd place runner-up is 6th grader, Alex Scroggins, and the 3rd place runner-up is 6th grader, Latroya Portis. GSMS is extremely proud of the three finalists and the other students who participated in the school's geography bee.

GCPS will not hold a county bee; however, the state-level bee is March 30, with the time and location to be determined. The National Bee will be held May 22 -24 in Washington, DC.



SIXTH GRADE NEWS



CONGRATULATIONS to the 6th Grade Language Arts teachers and students! The students scored higher than the county average on the 1st

semester Post-test. Currently, they are working on improving and developing their skills in persuasive and expository writing. As well, they are also exploring the wonderful world of reading through various novels in class.

EXCELLENT JOB, 6th Grade Math teachers and students! In December, GSMS 6th Grade Math students scored higher on the 1st semester Post- test than the county average. The test covered concepts such as fractions, number theory, equations, and data analysis. This semester, the focus of 6th Grade Math will turn to geometry. Currently, the students are learning to apply the concept of proportional relationships. Soon students will be working on surface area, volume, scale factor, and probability.

Sixth Grade Science teachers and students are continuing to explore the many aspects of the Earth and finding ways to incorporate hands-on, minds-on activities. They kicked off their study of water by looking at the effects of dihydrogen monoxide and the website www.dhmo.org. Students explored this website and chose if DHMO should be banned in the United States. Through this activity, the students were able to combine their literacy and critical thinking skills with a science concept. The teachers are always looking for ways students can use what they learn in other classes and experiences outside the classroom to enhance and make Earth Science relevant.

The Changing World of Social Studies

The power of one can have a great impact on our world for the better or the worse. History is littered with individuals who refused to accept the norm especially when the norm meant the denial of certain basic rights. Martin Luther King, Ghandi, Nelson Mandella, and the women of Liberia are just several examples. In more recent times, a man in Tunisia burned himself to death in December 2010 in protest of his treatment by police. This sparked the fuse of the dynamite of pro-democracy rebellions to erupt across the Middle East and take down many brutal dictators with it. All over the Middle East, the young are using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to cry out against the injustice of tyranny. For 7th grade teachers and students, this is an exciting time because history is being made before their very eyes.

The areas of the world being studied are changing at such a frantic pace that in some sense we are all becoming revisionists. That which was factual for so long is now falling and setting new forces in motion and changing how we understand these regions. For example, did you know that Sudan is now two separate nations (Arab North and Christian South)? GSMS' Social Studies teachers are teaching students how to make sense of these rapid changes by keeping up with current events in these regions and having discussions about how it will impact other nations. Note how this change has impacted Gwinnett County:

Study of Sudan – 7th Grade

Due to the recent secession and consequent independence of South Sudan from Sudan, the State Department of Education plans to revise selected GPS. The Indicators of Achievement targeted for revision are:

31b - locate on a world and regional political-physical map the countries of Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire), Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Sudan

36a - compare the republican systems of government in the Republic of Kenya and the Republic of South Africa to the dictatorship of the Republic of Sudan, distinguishing the form of leadership and role of the citizen in terms of voting and personal freedoms

According to social studies program specialists at the GA DOE, any items that may be on the current CRCT about Sudan have been "flagged" for removal. In addition, there are no test items on the GCPS Interims that assess either of these selected Indicators of Achievement. GCPS items reflecting these selected indicators have been removed from the item bank. Further information will be forthcoming when final GPS revisions have been approved.

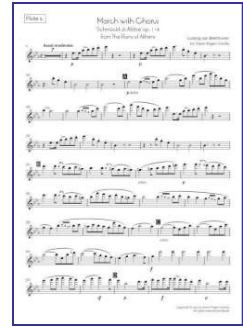
Connections — Orchestra and Chorus

Members of the 8th Grade Orchestra will be traveling during school to the Norcross High School Theater for the Georgia Music Educator's District 13th Large Group Performance Evaluation on Friday, February 24. The performance time is 4:30 pm; and after the performance, the students will participate in sight-reading and a mini-clinic. This is GSMS' Festival Performance, and it is very much like a standardized test for the orchestra students and their director.

The orchestra students and Mrs. Kimberly Rooker are looking forward to the challenge of the guidelines that GMEA has in place for orchestra performance in middle school.

Congratulations to Philip Baglio, Alyssa Doyley and Rebekah Weldon who will represent GSMS at Georgia All-State Chorus in Savannah! These students made it through two rigorous auditions and will be attending the event February 23-25.

Congratulations to Emily Caughman, Thalia Hall and Morgan McKenzie! They were selected to attend Statewide 6th Grade Honor Chorus February 10-11 in Tifton.



Holidays Around the World

Greetings from Ms. Ashley Todd' s class! During the week before winter break, Ms. Todd's class unwrapped holiday traditions from around the world. Each day, her students studied a different culture's holiday. Hanukkah, Kwanza, Las Posadas, and Christmas were the main focus of the week long unit. The students were very excited to learn about different celebrations and how people celebrate the different holidays. At the end of each day, the class created a holiday specific craft. The students made dreidels, Kwanza mats, piñatas, and ornaments. They had the most fun making the piñatas because they burst them at their end-of-the-week "Celebrations Around the World" holiday festivity.



Ms. Todd and her students hope everyone enjoyed his/her break and family traditions!

Media Center News

Stay updated on news by visiting the Media Center webpage frequently!
<http://gracesnellmedia.weebly.com/index.html>

The Media Center hosted a movie night on January 20. On the Media Center webpage, students were able to vote on the movie they wanted to see. The movie night was a great success, and GSMS will be having more this year!

Nooks will be ready for checkout later this next week! Each Nook will have over 20 eBooks already loaded. To check one out, students must have a permission slip signed by their parents.

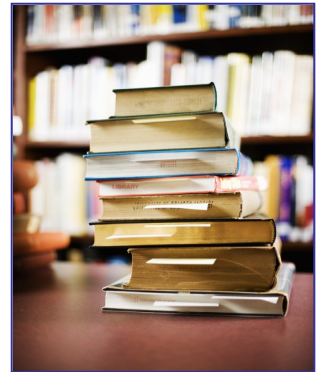
The Stellar Readers Program: Students are required to read and review at least 10 books over the year. The reviews should tell the audience a little bit of what the book is about and the student's opinion of the book. Each review should be between 5 and 10 sentences.

If students read and review 15 books by May 11, they will receive candy.

If students read and review 20 books by May 11, they will be eligible for the ice cream sundae party. The top reader from each grade will receive a Barnes and Noble gift card!

Please visit the Media Center website for more information. The Media Center will be hosting lots of exciting events this year including: Movie Nights, art and writing contests, trivia contests based on books, Read to Succeed for Six Flags tickets, and other reading promotions. Check the website frequently for details.

If you are interested in volunteering in the Media Center please contact Jennifer Sweat or Gail Thayer.



Technology

New Technology Arrives at Grace Snell

Grace Snell Middle School teachers are so excited about the arrival of the first major batch of new technology since opening a year and a half ago. GSMS recently received several MimioPads that will soon be available for teacher use. MimioPads allow teachers to control their laptops and projectors from anywhere in their classrooms, and they allow classes to be more interactive by letting teachers and students draw or write on the whiteboard simply by drawing on the pad. These devices are currently being prepared for training and checkout by teachers, and already several teachers have expressed interest. GSMS looks forward to seeing the innovation and interactivity these devices will bring to its classrooms!

Targeted Title I Technology

GSMS is very fortunate to have the support and funding of the Title I program. Through this program, the school is able to purchase even more technology for those teachers who work with eligible students. Each Title I teacher will be receiving her own MimioPad and will also be receiving a MimioTeach system that will turn her regular whiteboard into an interactive Smart Board. Several student response systems are also on their way. These allow teachers to make their classes truly interactive by allowing for immediate feedback from students by way of a "clicker" which serves as a voting device. Using the student response system, students can participate in polls, votes, or even tests using the clicker allowing teachers to receive immediate feedback. GSMS can hardly wait to have this great new technology!

Title I



Targeted Title I program students have the opportunity to participate in Saturday morning Math and Language Arts CRCT preparation classes starting

in February. They will have the opportunity to receive additional assistance for these critical testing subject areas.

In an effort to prepare students for the April 2012 Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), invitations have been sent to identified students who are eligible to attend the Saturday program.

Upcoming Events

February 6	Quarter 3 Progress Reports Executive – PTSA Meeting, 7:00 pm
February 6–10	FBLA Valentine Bears' Pre-sale
February 8	8 th Grade Career Fair during Lunch
February 13	School Council
February 14	FBLA Valentine Bears' deliveries
February 15	ESOL/Special Ed Title I Meeting
February 16	SWP Title I Meeting
February 17 & 20	Student/Teacher Holiday
February 18	Run the Reagan
February 22	Access Testing – Reading
February 23	Title I Parent Involvement Day Access Testing – Writing
February 27 & 28	Rising 9th Grade Meeting at SGHS Early Release
March 1	Basketball Banquet, 6:00 pm
March 2	Student/Faculty Basketball Game

Yearbook

Please remember to order your student's yearbook by February 1. No late orders will be accepted, and no extra books will be for sale.

The order form is located on the next page.

PTSA

Dear Students, Parents, Faculty, and Staff

Well, the school year is on the downward path! It is hard to believe that the school year is just over half way finished! The PTSA has many fun activities planned for the rest of the year; be sure to check the school's website frequently. As well, PTSA is in need of volunteers to be active participants on the PTSA's Executive Board next year. Please let the PTSA board know if you are willing and able to volunteer. Again, please feel free to email with any questions!

Vandy Dixon
GSMS PTSA President

We are on the web at
www.gracesnellms.org

Order Your 2011-12 Yearbook!

Grace Snell Middle School

“A Splash of Color!”

\$35.00 until February

Name _____

HR _____

Grade (circle) 6 7 8

Parent Name _____

Parent Phone # _____

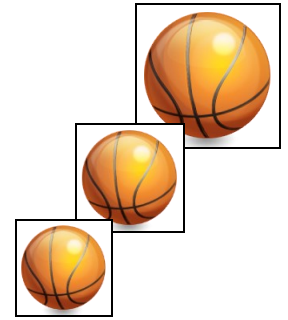
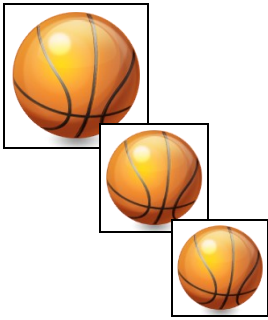
Check Cash

Make check payable to: **Grace Snell PTSA**

If sending cash, please include exact amount.

No change can be given through front office.

- Put payment and order form in an envelope.
- Deposit envelope in Yearbook box in front office.
- Students must bring envelope to front office before HR.



2011–12 Grace Snell Middle School
Basketball Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Team</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Time</u>
December 8	Shiloh	(at Shiloh)	5:00 A
December 10	Moore	(at Central)	9:00 A
December 15	Trickum	(at Parkview)	5:00 A
January 5	Sweetwater	(at South Gwinnett)	5:00 H
January 7	BYE		
January 12	Bay Creek	(at South Gwinnett)	5:00 H
January 19	Snellville	(at South Gwinnett)	5:00 H
January 21	Five Forks	(at South Gwinnett)	9:00 H
January 26	Richards	(at Central)	5:00 A
January 28	Crews	(at South Gwinnett)	9:00 H
February 4	Couch	(at South Gwinnett)	9:00 H
February 2	Berkmar	(at Berkmar)	5:00 A
February 9	McConnell	(at Archer)	5:00 A

Super Saturday February 11; Division Semis February 13/15
Championship Games February 21/23
Games will be held at Parkview High School